

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **Cleary Petroleum Oil Development on the Triangle Ranch Wildlife Management Area, Juab County, Utah**

#### **Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Federal Aid Project (W-15-L)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act as it applies to the Federal Aid In Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts (64 Stat. 430; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 777 et. seq. and 50 State 916; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 669 et. seq.).

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (Division) and the Service prepared an environmental assessment (EA), entitled *Cleary Petroleum Oil Development on the Triangle Ranch Wildlife Management Area, Juab County, Utah*, to evaluate the impacts of an oil development project proposed by Cleary Petroleum on the Triangle Ranch Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Cleary Petroleum is leasing the mineral rights under the WMA from a private third party and has proposed to exercise its right to develop the lease for oil exploration and production. This would entail improvement of an existing road, additional road construction, installation of one well pad and production equipment, and directional drilling. Cleary Petroleum has submitted a right-of-way (ROW) application to the Division for use of the surface property so it can access its sub-surface mineral rights.

Because the proposed project constitutes a change in the original purpose of the grant to purchase the WMA, the Division must seek approval from the Service in the form of an amendment to the grant before permitting the ROW. The Service's approval of the amendment is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

We evaluated three alternatives in the EA, including a no-action alternative. The two action alternatives entail improvement of an existing road, construction of additional road for access, construction of a well pad, directional drilling, and oil production from the oil pad and bottomhole associated with directional drilling. The second action alternative would require construction of 1,250 feet of road and disturbance of 0.58 acre of habitat above those of the preferred alternative. Three alternatives involving access from and placement of the well in different areas were dismissed from evaluation because these alternatives would have resulted in unjustified financial costs and habitat impacts due to construction of longer roads, longer distances needed for directional drilling, and increased length of time to accomplish the project.

In the preferred alternative, Cleary Petroleum would improve an existing two-track dirt road extending from adjacent property onto the WMA, then construct a new unpaved road to the well pad site. The road would be 20 feet wide, including side grades, and would be 7,746 feet in length on the WMA. The total amount of disturbance from road improvement and construction on the WMA would be 3.56 acres.

The well pad would consist of a graded area of exposed soil installed with oil extraction

structures, such as a drill rig, well with a pump, reserve pit and flare pit, holding tanks for produced water and oil, gathering pipelines, topsoil stockpile, heater, and storage trailers. The total amount of disturbance to construct the well pad would be about 3.44 acres, plus up to another 1 acre of side-cut and fill. The larger size of the proposed well pad than is typical is necessary to accommodate directional drilling to extract oil in an area north of the proposed well pad without needing to construct more well pads. The combined area of disturbance from road improvement and construction and well pad construction would be up to 8 acres.

Road improvements and construction and well pad construction would take from one to two weeks to complete. Drilling would take place for 20 to 30 days, with a crew of 3 to 4 employees present around the clock. Water needed for drilling would be purchased and hauled in by truck 3 to 5 times per day on average. Oil production could last for up to 20 years or more. Further oil extraction could occur for another 20 years or more if more oil is discovered through directional drilling.

Cleary Petroleum would implement a number of measures to minimize impacts to wildlife resources and habitats on the WMA. These include: 1) salvaging and stockpiling vegetation and soil from construction site for future reclamation, 2) lining reserve pit to prevent seepage of hazardous materials into soils and fencing the pit to prevent wildlife from entering it, 3) implementing best management practices recommended in the Surface Operating Standards for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development (prepared by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service in 1989) for road and well pad construction to reduce the likelihood of erosion and sedimentation, 4) sealing off the formation if drilling penetrates an aquifer to prevent contamination, 5) use of remote telemetry, rather than worker access, to monitor the well site during production to minimize disturbance to wildlife, 6) restricting construction activities to outside the wintering season for big game, 7) accessing the well site during seasonal closure only when necessary and then during mid-day hours to avoid disturbance to big game which are less active during this time, 8) once into the production phase, revegetating disturbed areas with a Division-approved seed mix, 9) prohibiting workers from bringing firearms and dogs on the WMA to reduce the chance of poaching and wildlife disturbance, 10) educating workers on safe speed limits to reduce roadkill of wildlife, 11) installing cattle guards and gates to deter access to the WMA by adjacent landowner cattle and off-road vehicles, 12) cutting snow breaks in snow banks over 2 feet high to prevent barriers to wildlife movement across the road, 13) implementing measures in the Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining surface-use plan for addressing potential spills of hazardous materials, 14) reclaiming and reseeding disturbed areas after oil production is completed according to Division specifications, and 15) implementing a habitat improvement project to open up dense pinyon-juniper habitat in other areas of the WMA.

No prime or unique farmlands or wetlands and floodplains would be affected by the project, because none occur on or adjacent to the project site. No federally listed species or candidates for federal listing occur within or near the project area, and thus none would be affected by the project. Historic and cultural resources would not be affected because Cleary Petroleum would flag and avoid any discovered during archeological surveys.

The amount of area in the WMA available for hunting, wildlife viewing, and horseback riding would be reduced slightly because, recreational activities would not be allowed near the project area for safety reasons. Operation of vehicles and equipment on the road and well pad may

detract from the visual and auditory qualities of recreational use in the vicinity of the restricted area. However, large portions of the WMA would still be available for recreational activities.

We determined that the project would not result in significant impacts to wildlife resources on the WMA. This conclusion is based on the minimization, avoidance, and mitigation measures that Cleary Petroleum would implement; information indicating that ample suitable habitat for big game, small mammals, birds, and reptiles exist in the surrounding area as an alternative for the 8 acres of habitat that would be temporarily degraded or lost; and information indicating that project noise and activities would not result in significant disturbance and energy costs to wildlife.

We solicited public comment on the EA through a public notice in the Salt Lake Tribune, Deseret News, Nephi Times, and on the Service's website for Region 6. We also sent the public notice by electronic mail or facsimile transmission to several potentially interested parties. We did not receive any comments on the project, and we do not expect the project to result in public controversy. The EA is on file in the Service's Region 6 Office at 134 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, Colorado 80225 and is available for public review upon request.

Based on review of the EA, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Consequently, we will not prepare an environmental impact statement.

**INITIATOR:**

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Signature	Date
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**CONCUR:**

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Chief, Division of Federal Aid	Date
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**APPROVAL**

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Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6	Date
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**References**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. Final Environmental Assessment – Cleary Oil Development on the Triangle Ranch Wildlife Management Area, Juab County, Utah. April 19, 2005. Lakewood, CO. 33 pp. <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/federalassistance>